Emotional Intelligence, Impulse Buying and Self-Esteem: the Predictive Validity of Two Ability Measures of Emotional Intelligence

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The present study tests for reliable measurement and criterion validity of two ability measures of emotional intelligence: the Consumer Emotional Intelligence Scale (CEIS, 2008) and the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT, 2002). In specific, we examine EI's influence on impulse buying and self-esteem and how different functional areas of EI uniquely affect these two constructs. The results provide new empirical insights regarding the criterion validity of different measures of EI in the context of consumer research.

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Abstract

The present study tests for reliable measurement and criterion validity of two ability measures of emotional intelligence: the Consumer Emotional Intelligence Scale (CEIS, 2008) and the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT, 2002). In specific, we examine EI’s influence on impulse buying and self-esteem and how different functional areas of EI uniquely affect these two constructs. The results provide new empirical insights regarding the criterion validity of different measures of EI in the context of consumer research.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a set of four broad categories of abilities that together enable individuals to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in themselves and others to achieve productive and/or positive ends (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008; Mayer and Salovey 1997).

Kidwell, Hardesty, and Childers (2008) have developed the Consumer Emotional Intelligence Scale (CEIS) based on the classic measure of emotional intelligence, the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2002). The CEIS differs from MSCEIT, in that it is shorter (18 items) and domain specific (marketing), whereas the MSCEIT is longer (141 items) and domain-generic.

Kidwell, Hardesty and Childers (2008) empirically showed that the CEIS is a better predictor of consumer decision making than MSCEIT. The present study aims to provide new and additional empirical insights regarding the criterion and predictive validity of CEIS vs. MSCEIT. We select impulsive buying and self-esteem as important consumer behavior constructs in which the ability to reason about emotions could impact decision quality. Additionally, we also included personality to test incremental predictive validity of EI.

Impulse buying and EI

Impulse buying could be described as unplanned and often uncontrolled urge to buy products. Recent research on impulse buying (e.g. Verplanken et al 2005) suggests that people engage in quick buying mostly due to affective reasons. Therefore, it is important to understand the ability of a consumer to: (a) differentiate between emotions; (b) use emotions to guide thoughts and behavior.

The perceiving emotions branch helps individuals to accurately identify the different emotions that could be elicited as a result of a purchase decision. The cognitive facilitation branch helps individuals to prioritize, think, and act in judiciously based on how they feel.

Because impulsive purchases are made quickly and often driven by hedonic or emotional considerations, we hypothesize that each of these branches and the overall EI will negatively influence impulsive buying behavior.

Self-Esteem and EI

Self-esteem is defined as “how much value people place on themselves” (Baumeister et al. 2003). The interaction between the cognitive and affective components that underlines the construct highlights the fact that affective information is being used to form attitudes of oneself over the long term. Therefore, an individual with higher levels of EI-abilities should be able to reason with and modify emotional information so that over the long term, a positive overall self-evaluation is formed.

The understanding emotions-branch helps individuals to understand the complexities of emotions that are felt. The management branch helps individuals modify the possible negative emotions in frustration into positive emotions, thereby potentially producing a
positive self-evaluation or higher self-esteem. Therefore, we hypothesize that each of these branches and the overall EI will positively influence self-esteem.

**Method**
A total of 152 students (68 females and 79 males) from a southwestern university completed an online study in a controlled environment (lab) for extra credit. The online study included ability measures of EI (MSCEIT 2003 and CEIS 2008), impulse buying (Rook and Fisher 1995), self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965), personality (TIPI) and general demographics. The subjects had 50 minutes to complete the survey and the order of the questions was randomized.

**Results and Analysis**
To compare the CEIS’s and MSCEIT’s effects on impulse buying and self-esteem, we compared bivariate correlations between EI scores computed by each of those scales, impulse buying and self-esteem. Both EI scales significantly predicted impulse buying and self-esteem and the correlations weren’t statistically different. We also used separate hierarchical regression analyses with personality added at step 1 and CEIS (regression 1) or MSCEIT (regression 2) in step 2. When this was used to predict impulse buying, CEIS significantly added variance over and above personality ($\beta=.18, \Delta R^2=.03$, both $p<.05$), whereas MSCEIT did not. Both CEIS and MSCEIT added significant variance over personality when used to predict self-esteem.

In order to look at the relationship between impulse buying and EI, and self-esteem and EI, we created a combined EI-index created by the mean of normal scores from CEIS and MSCEIT. A hierarchical regression analysis was done with impulse buying or self-esteem as the dependent variable. EI negatively and significantly predicted impulse buying behavior ($\beta=-.21, \Delta R^2=.04$, both $p<.05$) and self-esteem ($\beta=.25, \Delta R^2=.06$, both $p<.01$) over and above the influence of personality variables.

To test our hypotheses related to the branches of EI, experience and reasoning area-scores obtained from MSCEIT and CEIS were normalized and averaged to form a combined index. Then, those experiential and reasoning area scores were used as independent variables in the regression equation to predict the impulse buying and self-esteem. The experiential area predicted impulse buying ($\beta=-.21, p<.05$), whereas the reasoning area did not ($\beta=-.08, ns$). The reasoning area predicted self-esteem ($\beta=.27, p<.01$), whereas the experiential area did not ($\beta=.09, ns$). The results support our hypotheses.

**Conclusion**
This study was the first attempt to examine incremental, measurement and criterion validity for emotional intelligence in consumer research. Our results suggest that CEIS predicted impulse buying slightly better than MSCEIT over and above the effects of personality.

EI, as a construct, significantly and incrementally predicted both impulse buying (negatively) and self-esteem (positively) over personality. At the branch level, the experiential area of EI was significant in predicting impulse buying and the reasoning area of EI was significant in predicting self-esteem. Our results suggest that consumers might activate different functional areas of emotional intelligence while engaging in consumer behaviors or decisions particularly those in which emotions play an important role.

**References**


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**The Role of Innovativeness in Environmentally Conscious Consumer Behavior**
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Michael R. Solomon, Saint Joseph’s University, USA

**Abstract**
This study seeks to improve the predictive utility of the attitude-behavior link within the realm of environmentally responsible consumption. Using a sample of over 1400 American consumers, we collected data on attitudes about the environment, proclivity for new